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20 July 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training

SUBJECT : The Adequacy of Preparation and Propriety of Selection of Career Trainees for Overseas Assignment to Vietnam and Other Potential "Hot Spots" in Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America

I. Poser

Should the Agency and more particularly the Office of Training and the Medical Staff consider supplementing the assessment and training of Career Trainees being assigned to Vietnam and other potentially-explosive areas. This writer does not believe there is any question as to the appropriateness of the assessment and training programs presently employed. The question is whether or not they are sufficient.

II. Present Selection and Training Procedures

A. The processing of Career Training Program candidates is exhaustive and provides the Agency with a dimensional image of each aspirant. In particular, the medical examination, A&E testing, and Career Training Program Staff interviews effect an initial winnowing of those who do not meet our standards or who would not be happy with us from those who meet our standards and would be content in a career in the Agency.

B. Career Trainees ultimately bound for the DDP have a thorough grounding in operational techniques and methodology and are provided ample opportunity to "try out" in a variety of face-to-face problems. Also, the "paper" of our business is no longer a mystery by the time their training is completed.

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Opportunities are provided for language training and maintenance of language proficiency as appropriate. The Career Trainee is well prepared for an overseas assignment in a relatively stable and reasonably civilized country.

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III. Speculation

A. Is the Career Trainee prepared for and equal to a semi-barbaric country where violence is more the rule than the exception? Is he equal to an assignment requiring alertness and awareness 24 hours of every day? Such an assignment calls for resourcefulness as an absolute "must" for success and, in some cases, for survival. In an atmosphere of perpetual tension where there is neither civilian nor military law and order, as we understand it, emotional stability, moral fiber, and physical endurance become very real considerations. Are we properly selecting and preparing young Career Trainees for assignments of this nature?

B. Until very recent times, the training techniques and assessment exercises employed by the Office of Strategic Services during World War II would have seemed unsophisticated and unnecessary. The circumstances whereby a young officer had to be "tried" and tested as well as trained in a very short period of time prior to his dispatch behind enemy lines may not be synonymous with the preparation of a Career Trainee for assignment to Vietnam but the nature and fiber required of both men could certainly be considered analogous.

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C. The fact that a young man is not physically or emotionally equal to this particular type of assignment should not necessarily disqualify him for assignment within the Clandestine Services. Such an assignment requires a particular combination of courage, resourcefulness, and physical stamina that is not always easy to find in one young man regardless of our elaborate screening process.

IV. Possible Considerations

A. An additional block of training to consist of psychological pressure and stress situations and ingenuity-provoking exercises should be incorporated into one of the following courses of instruction:

1. Operations Course
2. Paramilitary Course
3. Survival Course

B. A concerted effort should be made by the A&E Staff working together with the Career Training Staff to identify those candidates who "measure up" to a mutually agreed upon and reasonably well defined "image" of what the Agency requires for Vietnam-type assignments.

C. More attention should be given to the individual on-his-own in training exercises. The team function as an hour-by-hour day-by-day procedure is not always possible and when it is possible it is not always appropriate particularly when working in the "boondocks" with foreign nationals. This does not suggest that an Agency officer should forget his Agency's role in the American team scheme of things but it does suggest that he may not always be able to reach out and "touch" another American when the workday ends or when the job becomes lonely and difficult.

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